

LITERARY SUPPLEMENT TO THE ACADEMY

CONSISTING OF

NOTABLE ARTICLES, REVIEWS, Etc.,

WHICH HAVE APPEARED FROM TIME TO TIME IN "THE ACADEMY" SINCE ITS INCEPTION.

The Luck of the Artist: By H. D. Lowry

(January 12, 1901.)

PEOPLE who do not paint pictures or write stories often express a childlike wonder that anyone should be able to do so; but they fail to recognise how large an element of luck goes to the producing of a successful work of art. The painter and the novelist may well comfort themselves when they have failed by remembering an old Cornish proverb which alleges of everything human that "'tis accordin' as it may drop."

Of course, the man who is to make a success must start with certain gifts. He must also work hard, and produce picture after picture, story after story, which is only fit to put on the fire, in order that he may learn the trade he has chosen to adopt. One has often heard artists wonder when early work has been turned out and inspected what on earth induced them to believe when it was done that they could ever by any possibility do anything worth doing. The wonder is natural enough, but results cannot be expected at once, and the boy who means to become a writer is doing all that can be desired if he is watching life, and trying hard to describe it, and failing, and trying again. It is a very good exercise, even though you have no gift of poetry, to hammer out *villanelles* and *rondeaux*. The occupation may be described as mechanical, and so it is, and so you are brought to realise that words are your tools and that you must learn, as a mere preliminary, to use them as Grinling Gibbons used the tools of the wood-carver, or even to play with them as Cinquevalli does with billiard-balls. You must learn to draw, in fact: to see what you want to do, and do it.

Then comes in this question of luck. You may have produced many good things before you are visited by the finest idea that ever man conceived. You are reading some ancient chronicle, let us suppose, and suddenly come on a scrap of tradition, told in half-a-dozen lines, in which you can see the germ of a short story. You have to make alterations, and here again you depend on your luck. In such a case there is almost always a jump: you alter detail after detail, and you know the reason in every case. Then you suddenly alter everything, and

Heaven alone knows why. For example, in one case a writer conceived the idea of a man being compelled to watch a murder, which, through some seizure of the senses, he was unable to prevent. That was naturally suggested by a true story he had read in the newspapers. Then came the jump. Opposite the original scribble in his note-book he wrote: "The man compelled to watch *himself* commit a murder." He had had luck, but, even so, he was only halfway to success. He had to write his story.

Again and again the good idea does not come off. Mr. T. C. Gotch, lecturing some time ago, declared that he heartily envied certain pre-Raphaelite painters. There were many things that they took it for granted they could not do: for example, they had not been taught that it was possible for the painter to model hands as they are modelled in "The Child Enthroned." Therefore, when they had conceived an idea, they simply went straight ahead and put it on canvas, and rested from their labours. Nothing is more tragic than the history of some pictures which never got painted. They were roughed in, and they were delightful: one would have been glad to possess them when they had cost the painter only a couple of days' work; and a little later one would have liked to be able to compel the artist to desist. But in one little corner he had not done the utmost that could be done, and so there were further labours. The result of them was that the bit on which he had been working no longer seemed to belong to the picture of which it was part. So there was more work to be done; and the end of it all was waste of paint and another canvas hidden away in the obscurest corner of the studio. Yet one has known the painter get an idea and get it on the canvas apparently with no more difficulty than the thrush seems to experience in singing his morning song. That was when he had the luck.

It is exactly the same with stories. You have done your best to learn how to write, and have some reason for believing that you have not altogether failed. You are blest with an idea, and in a flash you see the story from beginning to end. You even know what will be its length when it is completed. You try to write it, and you fail; and the result is the same after many such efforts. It may be that the essential thing is that you

shall take an eminently respectable and everyday man and invest him with an atmosphere of honour, and your failure is due to the fact that you have not effected this. It is intended he should awe a whole village; you have pictured him so badly that he would not scare a child. So the story remains a mere sentence in your note-book, and the years go by until, to all intents and purposes, you have forgotten it. Then comes a day when you have nothing particular to do, and the story recurs to you and you sit down and write it, and by the simplest methods make your old man a magnificent bogey. The story gets published and people think you fortunate to have a tale of 5,000 words presented to the public in a magazine whose proprietors are known to pay generously. They do not know, and you do not explain to them, that at one time and another you have burned 15,000 words written in abortive attempts to tell that same simple story.

Sometimes you may not wait for your luck. An editor demands a story, and you dare not disobey. Also, there are plenty of tales already outlined in your note-books. You go over them with care, and select the one that seems most likely to come easily. Then you sit down, and by dint of doggedness, and by thinking of your tailor, and your landlord, and the club subscription which is fast becoming due, you manage to get the tale told after a fashion. The editor and his subscribers may be pleased, but the only satisfaction you get is the cheque, and that is a spoonful of jam that hides a pile of nauseating powder.

The great thing is to get simplicity. A child whose portrait had been painted by Mr. Whistler said afterwards that he seemed to blow it on the canvas, and simply to take exercise with his brushes. Every artist will declare that that is how he did the only work by which he desires to be known. The good idea is not in itself worth anything to the man who is critical as to his own work. The best that one does is done most easily. Immortal lyrics may be turned out in railway carriages on the Underground. Stodgy leading articles may cost the author hours of research in the British Museum. It is all a question of luck, and most artists are never allowed to produce the one work which they really desire to give to the world. It is perfectly clear to them, but they cannot find how to begin; or, if they see that, they fail to discover when they should end, and canvas after canvas goes away to a dark recess of the studio, page after page of MS. is thrown on the fire. But luck only comes to those who have taught themselves by dint of long toil how to make use of it when it arises.

Review: By William Knight

(January 1, 1881.)

GREATER praise could scarcely be given to Mr. Myers' book on Wordsworth than is implied in the fact that he has managed to say something original on the subject of the poet's genius, without traversing the ground covered by recent criticism, and, indeed,

while scarcely alluding to previous discussions of the subject. The attention which has been given to Wordsworth of late is significant in many ways. Mr. Arnold, Mr. Leslie Stephen, Mr. Caird, Mr. Symonds, and Mr. Aubrey de Vere—to allude only to one or two—have all struck a distinctive note in their treatment of a poet who appeals to each of them in a different fashion; and now Mr. Myers gives us a picture of the man and an estimate of his work which is certainly not inferior to anything that has preceded it.

The facts of Wordsworth's life have been mostly drawn from the "Memoirs" written by his nephew, the Bishop of Lincoln, in 1850; but it has been Mr. Myers' good fortune, "through hereditary friendship, to have access to many MS. letters, and much oral tradition bearing upon the poet's private life"; so that "some details and some passages of letters hitherto unpublished appear in his pages." He has, however, exercised a wise discretion in omitting "such minor personal incidents" as the poet "would himself have thought it needless to dwell upon." It is, perhaps, inexpedient for anyone—however competent—to attempt to write the Life of a great man "as if the subject of the biography were himself the auditor." Were such a rule carried out, biography would be inevitably maimed, and the truth of things distorted. No original genius can possibly judge of what posterity will desire to know, and be the better for knowing, regarding the circumstances of his life; and many have altogether failed in estimating the most distinctive features of their own literary work. But if any exception may be made to this rule, it may, for obvious reasons, be made in the case of Wordsworth. There is no doubt as to his own wish that only a brief memorial of his life should be written; and the modern tendency is to overload biography with details. In this century there is more risk than ever before that the reputation of a great man may be impeded rather than advanced by a chronicle of the minuter incidents of his life, and his very path to posterity blocked by means of it. It is unhappily true that many distinguished lives have been buried in their biographies. Mr. Myers understands this; and in his references to the poems on "Lucy," for example, he has carried it out. Wordsworth has told us nothing of the history of the emotion of which these exquisite fragments are the chronicle, except what the poems themselves contain; and his biographer wisely says:—"Who ever learned such secrets rightly? or who should wish to learn? It is best to respect the reserve, not only of the living, but of the dead." Nevertheless, the story of the poet's life is sketched with admirable clearness, and all the more important events which modified it are successively noted and happily characterised.

Mr. Myers is not blind to Wordsworth's limitations. Cut off, by virtue of the very circumstances that made him what he was—the high-priest of Nature—from much of the passion and the tumult of life, from those mingled experiences which have given birth to the drama, and which have been the source of lyric fire to so many minds, the orbit of Wordsworth's genius is not

so wide as that of many inferior men; but, in his case, it is both more important and more difficult to appraise his merits than to signalise his defects. His failure in certain directions was the inevitable accompaniment of his greatness in others.

The "Sonnets to Liberty" are characterised as the "most permanent record in our literature of the Napoleonic war." Wordsworth "had not swayed senates, nor directed policies, nor gathered into one ardent bosom all the spirit of an heroic age; but he had deeply felt what it is that makes the greatness of nations." The poem entitled "The Happy Warrior" is described as "a manual of greatness; there is a Roman majesty in its simple and weighty speech"; and, in an interesting analysis, Mr. Myers points out how much there was common in the character of the great Admiral, who is the hero of that poem, and the poet's own—"a moral likeness so profound that the ideal of the recluse was realised in the public life of the hero." "These two natures, taken together," he adds, "form the perfect Englishman; nor is there any portrait fitter than that of 'The Happy Warrior' to go forth to all lands as representing the English character at its height."

If a poet, by strong concentration of thought, by striving in all things along the upward way, can leave us, in a few pages as it were, a summary of patriotism, a manual of national honour, he surely has his place among his country's benefactors; not only by that kind of courtesy which the nation extends to men of letters, of whom her masses take little heed, but with a title as assured as any warrior or statesman, and with no less direct a claim.

The defects of "The Excursion" as a didactic poem are very easily recognised; but it is important to note the effect of the one-sided criticism which it called forth upon the poet himself. It neither modified his theory of poetry nor his practice of the art. Wordsworth was grandly superior to criticism, much more so than Keats was; but he was much less open than Keats to what was just in the contemporary verdicts passed upon his poetry. And the effect of this was that, living in a world of his own, while his individuality deepened, his faults of temperament and idiosyncrasy increased.

An interesting fact, mentioned in a hitherto unpublished letter of the poet's sister, may explain the tenacity with which he clung to his poetic theory, and refused to gain the immediate popularity which he could easily have obtained had he abandoned it, and accommodated himself, like other men, to the demands of the hour. "He has no pleasure in publishing—he even detests it; and, if it were not that he is not over-wealthy, he would leave all his works to be published after his death." His tenacity of purpose is further illustrated by his refusal to abandon the artificial arrangement of his poems, first adopted in 1815, and to adopt instead of it a strictly chronological order. He thought such a plan too egotistical, as "emphasising the succession of moods in the poet's mind, rather than the lessons which these moods could teach." On this his critic truly observes

that, after a great writer's death, "the historical spirit" demands the arrangement which the poet refused to adopt in his lifetime.

I pass over Mr. Myers' discussion of Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction; his remarks on that "inventive music," "the most arbitrarily distributed and the most evanescent of all qualifications for writing poetry"; his apt comparison of "Laodamia" to a well-known passage in Sophocles; his criticism of those reproductions of the antique, in which Wordsworth's language remains "majestic, but no longer magical"; his explanation of the poet's failure as a translator of Virgil, and of the "Indian summer of his genius" which is seen in the "Evening Ode." There is truth, but also some error, in what is said about Wordsworth's failing power and "stiffening brain," and in what seems to be implied with reference to other poets who have lived to old age and passed their prime. Literature abounds with instances of great poets, philosophers, and artists whose best work has been done long after middle life, and who have shown no signs of stiffening brain even at three-score years and ten. The two "prevailing poets" of our era—Wordsworth's successors in the poetical hierarchy of England—are illustrations of this. Perhaps the isolation in which the recluse of Rydal Mount lived for so many years, his limited experience of life and indifference to contemporary events, may explain the comparatively early close of the productive period of his genius.

Possibly the best chapter in a book—every chapter of which is excellent—is that on "Natural Religion." Wordsworth's achievement in enabling us to "see into the life of things" is thus described:—"For a system of beliefs about Nature which paganism had allowed to become grotesque—of rites which had become unmeaning—he substituted an admiration for Nature so constant, an understanding of her so subtle, a sympathy so profound, that they became a veritable worship." His influence over a mind constitutionally so different as that of John Stuart Mill, at a time of crisis and dejection, is referred to as "perhaps as satisfactory a testimony to the value of his work as any writer can obtain."

"Whether these be theories," says Mr. Myers in a noteworthy passage, "they shall pass; whether these be systems, they shall fail; the true epoch-maker in the history of the human soul is the man who educes from this bewildering universe a new and an elevating joy. . . . There was, indeed, no aspect of Nature, however often depicted, in which his seeing eye could not discern some unnoted quality; there was no mood to which Nature gave birth in the mind of man from which his meditation could not disengage some element which threw light on our inner being. How often has the approach of evening been described! and how mysterious is its solemnising power! Yet it was reserved for Wordsworth, in his sonnet, 'Hail, Twilight! sovereign of one peaceful hour!' to draw out a characteristic of that gray waning light, which half explains to us its sombre and pervading charm. 'Day's mutable distinctions' pass away; all in the landscape that suggests our own age or our own handiwork is gone;

we look on the site seen by our remote ancestors, and the visible presence is generalised into an immeasurable past." . . .

A concluding chapter deals with the poet's letter on the projected railways in the Lake District of England, and with the general question of the utilisation of that region. It is easy to represent the opposition of Wordsworth and others to its invasion by machinery as unpatriotic, as opposed to the interests of the labouring classes, who require excursions among the mountains more than others, etc. But it is well-known that what is most characteristic in that district has scarcely any attraction for the crowds that congregate there, emptied out of cheap trains on annual or weekly holidays. There is abundant opportunity for our factory operatives enjoying all that they can enjoy of Nature without imperilling the integrity of this "irreplaceable national possession." Mr. Myers consoles us by the remark that "if that natural sanctuary of England, the nurse of simple and noble natures," is sacrificed to the greed of gain, some new district will be found for the generations of the future. "Yet," he adds, "it will be long ere round some other lakes, upon some other hill, shall cluster memories as pure and high as those which hover still around Rydal and Grasmere, and on Helvellyn's windy summit, and 'by Glenridding Screes and low Glencoin.'"

Review: By Grant Allen

(January 8, 1887.)

In the Wrong Paradise, and Other Stories. By ANDREW LANG. (Kegan Paul, Trench and Co.)

WE live in an era of marvellous expansion. As in the Elizabethan age England woke up to a consciousness of America and the East, so now, in what I suppose (for want of a better name) we must call the Victorian age, she has woke up to a consciousness of the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, of Africa and Australia, of the solar system and the cosmos generally. This discovery reacts upon literature. The romance of anthropology, and the romance of the universe, are the keynote of art in the present generation. Stevenson, Rider Haggard, Lang, all exhibit it; from day to day it becomes more pronounced in magazine articles and in the general book-market.

Mr. Lang's new volume shows the anthropological bias in every page. Happy are they who have the last results of a difficult science set in so delightful a guise before them! The pill is so delicately and cunningly sugared that only the wise will ever detect its underlying pilliness; the foolish will swallow it whole at a gulp as a mere dainty sweetmeat. For Mr. Lang can never help being amusing. If he were to write a *Plane Trigonometry for the Use of Schools*, sines and co-sines would wink at us solemnly with a merry twinkle, and isosceles triangles would skip before our eyes like the little hills of the Hebrew Psalmist. His first story, "The End of Phaeacia," introduces us to a missionary

of the Bungletonian connexion, the Boanerges of the Pacific, who lights in the course of his evangelistic wanderings on the last surviving specimen of a Greek community, and describes the manners and customs of these benighted heathens as an officer of the Salvation Army might naturally be expected to describe them. In this case, I cannot help thinking Mr. Lang has allowed his archaeological knowledge to run away with him. I have never been accused of an excessive regard for missionary effort; but if the customs of Phaeacia were at all as he paints them, I confess that the Rev. Thomas Gowles has my sincerest sympathy. The Thargelias seem to have been a very unpleasant ceremony indeed; and any man, even if not a Boanerges, might reasonably object to being first flogged and then slowly roasted to death over a lingering fire. My love for the Greeks has never been strong, since I escaped alive from Aeschylus and Plato; and Mr. Lang has succeeded in finally convincing me that the modern loco-foco movement goes, after all, far ahead of the ancient Athenian ticket. A biological critic might also object to the presence on Scheria or Boothland of stags, bears, wolves, antelopes, and other large terrestrial mammals, which have no right at all to exist on an oceanic island, as Mr. Wallace has abundantly proved to us. If Boothland had an indigenous mammalian fauna at all (and even New Zealand has none), I would earnestly contend that it must have been of a low marsupial and Australian type. This, however, is to enquire too curiously. Fiction is fiction, and must be allowed some little latitude, else will people begin to assert that the name of Pickwick is not to be found in the London Directory, and that they have searched the Clergy List in vain for the Bishop of Barchester or the Rev. James Crawley.

"In the Wrong Paradise" is a charming paper, detailing the trials of an agnostic and a member of the United Presbyterian Kirk, who get into the happy hunting-ground of the Ojibbeways; a modern poetaster, who finds himself in the Greek Elysium; and an Arabic professor, much incommoded by the too pressing attention of gazelle-eyed houris belonging to the school of beauty chiefly admired by the faithful of Islam. Its theological implications impress an anxious mind as verging on heterodoxy. "The Romance of the First Radical" strikes at the very roots of society and religion, for it sets forth the appalling and revolutionary doctrine that "a thing is not necessarily wrong because the medicine-men say so, and the tribe believes them." If such ideas are scattered abroad, no security will remain for the deepest and most sacred convictions of our nature. Why-Why, too, is more in advance of his age than any single Radical can ever be; even Mr. Lang himself lets us see in this very volume that he objects to Home Rule, believes in the sacred right of somebody to taboo a whole shire, and regards non-payment of rent to a landlord as a culpable breach of the eighth commandment. "The Great Gladstone Myth" is a variation of an old and well-worn theme, but so cleverly handled that one reads it all with an unbroken sense of perfect

novelty. I am glad Mr. Lang seems to admit that there may be something in the "Spencerian or Euhemeristic method"; but, perhaps, this is merely an oversight.

Altogether, two things are to be said, from two points of view, about these stories. If we regard them merely as *jeux d'esprit*, they sparkle with wit and abound in the finest undertones of irony. If we regard them as light contributions to anthropology and mythology, they are rich in pregnant hints of real value, and cut some knotty points a great deal better than professorial seriousness.

Sonnet: A Glimpse as of the Old Gods

(June 14, 1884.)

WHEN still the dawn of time lay flush and fair
Upon the youngling earth, and gods were fain
To dwell among us—oft the shepherd swain,
Wandering the wooded dells, came unaware
On Dian, bathing in mid stream, all bare
Of aught save austere beauty, and half disdain,
And a divine great calm, that in his brain
Woke pure high thought and a chaste passion of prayer.

And now time wanes, and dreary falls the night;
But as we plod the murk world's miry ways,
Sometimes, ah sometimes still, through the bleary haze
A human soul breaks on us, silvery bright
In naked beauty;—and behold its light
Seems like a god-glimpse in the far-off days.

FRANK T. MARZIALS.

Sonnet: Sunken Gold

(February 2, 1884.)

IN dim green depths rot ingot-laden ships,
While gold doubloons that from the drowned hand
fell
Lie nestled in the ocean-flower's bell
With Love's gemmed rings once kissed by now dead
lips.
And round some wrought-gold cup the sea-grass whips,
And hides lost pearls, near pearls still in their shell,
Where sea-weed forests fill each ocean dell,
And seek dim sunlight with their countless tips.

So lie the wasted gifts, the long-lost hopes,
Beneath the now hushed surface of myself,
In lonelier depths than where the diver gropes.
They lie deep, deep; but I at times behold
In doubtful glimpses, on some reefy shelf,
The gleam of irrecoverable gold.

E. LEE HAMILTON.

Odelette

(July 8, 1882.)

ALL the grass is growing,
All the flowers are blowing;
'Tis thy love alone is with'ring
Night and day.

Now to every valley
Melted streamlets rally;
'Tis thy love alone is freezing
Night and day.

Sweet the opening flowers,
Sweet the greening bowers;
'Tis thy love alone is bitter
Night and day.

Sweet the zephyr's sighing
When the day is dying;
'Tis thy love alone is tuneless
Night and day.

Radiant rise the mountains,
Laughing dance the fountains;
'Tis thy lover only weepeth
Night and day.

HANLEY YORKE.

Review: By Henry Bradley

(January 8, 1887.)

The New English. T. L. KINGTON OLIPHANT. In 2 Vols. (Macmillan.)

NOTWITHSTANDING some antiquated philology here and there, Mr. Kington Oliphant's volume on "The Old and the Middle English" was, on the whole, an admirable piece of work; and probably most students of English have looked forward with interest to the appearance of the promised continuation, dealing with the history of the language from the date of the *Handlyng Synne* onwards. After an interval of eight years, the author has fulfilled his promise; and it may fairly be said that the excellence of this second part of his work is ample compensation for the long time which has been occupied in its production. It is true that the new volumes have very little of the literary attractiveness which characterised their predecessor. Instead of attempting to write a readable book, Mr. Oliphant has been content with producing the most valuable collection of materials for the lexical history of the English language that has hitherto been published. It would be unreasonable to complain because the work—to use one of the phrases which so deeply shock Mr. Oliphant's philological conscience—"has the defects of its qualities." A book so crowded with minute information must of necessity be uninviting to the general reader; but for serious

students the facts which it contains will be full of interest, and the author's incidental comments are not seldom amusing as well as instructive. . . .

It is curious to note how often phrases and idioms which one would have thought to be of recent origin turn out to be genuine antiques. Of this Mr. Oliphant's pages supply many instances. "To have an eye to the main chance," "to be in a wrong box," "a song worth twenty of it," all belong to the sixteenth century. "To fall vacant" goes so far back as the year 1420, and "if the worst comes to the worst" is found about 1620. Our "all moonshine" appears in Heywood as "moonshine in the water," which explains itself. . . .

A notice of this book would not be complete without some reference to Mr. Oliphant's defence of himself from the charge of "purism." He cannot understand, he says, why such an accusation should have been brought against him. He is guiltless of any wish to expel from the language any of the Romance or Latin words used by "the great writers of Dryden's School, the men of Swift's lifetime." Not only so, but he welcomes the introduction of any foreign word, such as *échelon* or *prestige*, which "unmistakeably fills up a gap." His "purism" amounts to this, that he exhorts writers of English "never to discard* a Teutonic word without good reason"; and if no Teutonic word can be found fit for their purpose, then "to prefer a French or Latin word naturalised before 1740 to any later comer."

To many persons the soundness of the rule thus laid down will appear absolutely self-evident. I am of another mind; but before stating my objections I have to make one large admission. There is no doubt that a strict following of Mr. Oliphant's maxim would effect a vast improvement in the style of many living English writers; because one of the commonest faults in composition is to use Latin or Romance words, or new-fangled words, through foppiness or negligence, where Teutonic words, or others of old date, would serve the purpose better. So far, then, the preference which Mr. Oliphant would inculcate for Teutonic and old Romance words is, to use a once famous phrase, a wholesome prejudice; far more wholesome, at any rate, than the Johnsonian prejudice in the contrary direction. But it is better to be under the control of right reason than of any prejudice whatever. It is better to be guided by a sound principle than by the best mechanical rule that can be deduced from it. There is a more excellent way than even Mr. Oliphant's. Let us try to see what it is.

It seems to me that the golden rule in writing is to abstain resolutely from every sort of affectation and self-display, and to choose those words which will most precisely suggest to the readers' mind the required thought and feeling. If a word fulfils this condition, it

does not greatly matter whether it occurs in a charter of King Offa or was invented by the veriest "penny-a-liner" yesterday. In saying this, I am not forgetting how greatly the effect of words depends upon their history. Sometimes a word may be the fittest to use because it is old and familiar; sometimes because it is archaic and unfamiliar; sometimes, again, just because it is new. One word may be useful because of the varied associations which it has gathered during a long history; another because it has few associations, and suggests nothing more than may be put into its definition. A right choice of words cannot be ensured—it may even be prevented—by following such philological rules as Mr. Oliphant would lay down. The instinct for true and effective expression must be trained by other schooling than this. Men who have not that instinct, or who care more to show their own cleverness than to convey their thought and feeling to others, will continue to write badly, though they may never use a word that is not to be found in Swift or Addison.

Of course, it is true that the Teutonic words of our language are, on the whole, the most emphatic and the richest in emotional force. But, is it desirable that we should always use the strongest words that we can find? If we do so habitually, and on trivial occasion, what more can we do when we really feel strongly? A truth that much needs to be recognised by writers of this generation is that emphasis of language which is in excess of the strength of feeling to be expressed is one of the worst of literary sins.

If it were possible for Mr. Oliphant to convert the world to his doctrines, the result would be very seriously to impoverish the English language. A few centuries ago, a forerunner of Mr. Oliphant would assuredly have condemned the introduction of the words "paternal" and "fraternal." He would have said, with reason, that these words did not "unmistakeably fill up a gap." But it is just because we have these less expressive synonyms that the words "fatherly" and "brotherly" are now richer in emotional value than are the German *väterlich* and *brüderlich*. So it is in many another case. Now, suppose that year by year a larger number of writers are persuaded to adopt the rule "never to discard a Teutonic word without good reason"—which will practically mean without *obvious* reason: a merely impalpable gain in appropriateness to the occasion will not be enough. What will be the consequence? Until the fashion becomes general, those who adopt it will write in a style which—like Mr. Oliphant's own—will appear to ordinary readers full of vigour, but somewhat blustering and violent, and lacking in light and shade. But every time a strong word is used where a weaker one would be more fitting it loses a little of its strength of meaning; and in process of time the Teutonic words, gradually robbed of their force by trivial use, will come to be so little different in effect from their Romance synonyms that there will no longer be "good reason" for retaining the latter in the language at all. In spite of Mr. Oliphant's wish to preserve the foreign words naturalised before the magic date of 1740, the general acceptance of his maxims would be sure ulti-

* The context shows that Mr. Oliphant is not using this word in its correct meaning. If he meant that no Teutonic word should be treated as obsolete without good reason, the maxim would be sound, though I should prefer to enlarge its scope by omitting the word Teutonic.

mately to bring about the extinction of all of them which have any approximate equivalent of Teutonic origin.

Mr. Oliphant is never tired of railing at the "penny-liners" of the daily press. He is right in deploring—if the fact be truly so—that these gentlemen so often write twaddle. But why should he regard it as an aggravation of their offence that they twaddle in a new-fangled jargon instead of twaddling in good sound English? Ought he not rather to "con them thank" that they refrain from soiling with ignoble use the grand old words which he so dearly loves? The harm done by the influx of new words is, for the most part, only temporary. The great mass of them will die out, and those which survive in the struggle for existence will, in the main, be those which deserve to survive, however much they may displease philologists who care more for the purity of the language than for its efficiency as an instrument of expression. But, if the older and nobler elements of the English tongue be vulgarised in meaning, the mischief will be irreparable. And it is just this more fatal kind of corruption that an unwise purism is likely to promote.

The revivers of Teutonic English have so much truth on their side, and have done so much good, that their occasional extravagances may well be pardoned. But, if we may pardon, we must not justify, them; and we must sternly refuse to yield up any portion of the resources of modern English at the bidding of the philological pedantry that forgets what language exists for. That Mr. Oliphant is not free from such pedantry the title of his book is sufficient to prove. To be sure, what he chooses to call "the New English" is not so very much older than "New College"; but to the plain reader, unfamiliar with the little ways of our Anglo-Teutonists, the words will convey a wrong notion of the subject of the book. "The great writers of Dryden's school" would not have written thus. And, if they were living now, they would assuredly refuse to be debarred from using any English word merely because it came into the language after 1740.

If I have seemed to say more in censure than in praise of this excellent book, the reason is that it requires larger space to point out faults of detail than to acknowledge great general merits. Lest there should be any mistake, I will conclude by saying that the book would still be a good one if its faults were twice as many as they are.

A SUBSCRIPTION-LIST is being formed in England with a view to presenting a free-will offering to the American poet, Walt Whitman. The poet is in his sixty-seventh year, and has—since his enforced retirement, some years ago, from official work in Washington, owing to an attack of paralysis—maintained himself precariously by the sale of his works in poetry and prose, and by occasional contributions to magazines.

—July 11, 1885.

Kipling: By Lionel Johnson

(April 4, 1891.)

"' Good Lord! who can account for the fathomless folly of the public?' 'They're a remarkably sensible people.' 'They're subject to fits, if that's what you mean; and you happen to be the object of the latest fit among those who are interested in what they call art. Just now you're a fashion, a phenomenon, or whatever you please.'"

THIS is part of a conversation between Dick Helder, a young artist whose work has taken the public, and his best friend Torpenhow, in "The Light that Failed." Mr. Kipling will not think me discourteous if I confess that these wise words bear for me a second application to himself. Thanks to the incessant criticism, panegyric, detraction, and talk, inflicted upon his work in the last year, one feels an unreasoning desire, either to defer the study of Mr. Kipling till the hubbub die down, or to assume an indifference towards him, in the name of sober sense. Either course would be foolish, and neither is possible. Whatever else be true of Mr. Kipling, it is the first truth about him, that he has power: not a clever trick, nor a happy knack, nor a flashy style, but real intrinsic power. The reader of contemporary books, driven mad by the distracting affectations, the contemptible pettiness, of so much modern work, feels his whole heart go out towards a writer with mind and muscle in him, not only nerves and sentiment. To get into the grip of a new writer; not to saunter arm in arm with him, listening to his tedious and familiar elegancies: that is what we want. Style, the perfection of workmanship, we cannot do without that; but still less can we endure the dexterous and polished imitation of that. It is easy enough to find fault with Mr. Kipling, to deplore certain technical failures, to cry out against his lack of grace; but perfect workmanship is the last good gift, and granted only to the faithful and the laborious in literature. A writer whose first books have flesh and blood, mind and meaning in them, has the right to hope for all things. But the public is less kind than uncritical, when it admires "achieved perfection" in writings that have achieved much else that is good, but not yet that. . . .

Now, the first thought that occurs to one well acquainted with Mr. Kipling's work is of this sort: why is the interest of character so slight and the interest of action and of life so strong? Scenes of superb vigour and animation, passages of wonderful force and movement, these have struck us and taken hold upon us; but the characters, emotions, the mind and soul have not been felt, and do not remain with us. We remember how they looked, talked, bore themselves in various situations; we still hear their characteristic phrases, we still see their attitudes and motions; but themselves, their inner reality, for all the power and mind of the book, are strange to us. Perhaps this may be the reason. Mr. Kipling, before all things, is an observer, not a thinker. Certainly no one

can observe life without colouring or shaping his observations by his thoughts: each has his own way of observing life, according to his own habit and cast of mind. But it is not so much the reflections upon life, as the reflections of life, that Mr. Kipling values; and he leaves the bare facts, in all their intensity and vividness, to create the impression which he desires us to receive. There must be no waste of words, no flow of sentiment, no dwelling upon motives: take the facts, he seems to say, as lifelike as I can show them, and make what you can of them. This may be called cynicism, but it need not be that. Without question it is an effective literary method; but, and here is the difficulty, it is a method of very limited application. It will excellently serve for a brilliant sketch of certain scenes, where the men and women act and speak in character, with all the appropriate peculiarities of manner and speech. A third-class smoking-carriage full of soldiers, labourers, and city clerks, each with his personal or professional dialect and style, and with that curious force and energy which belong to the less cultured, Mr. Kipling's manner serves perfectly to give us that. But a drawing-room full of more sophisticated and of less intelligible persons, all possessing the complicated emotions and using the subtle language of a life externally refined: what will his robust method make of that?

Here we turn to Mr. Henry James. He will in twenty pages bring home to us the passion or the intellect at work in that room, perhaps during one hour only; yet each word will be essential and indispensable. If Mr. James tries his hand upon coarser material, he fails at once: witness many pages of the "Princess Casamassima." Hitherto, Mr. Kipling has been successful when dealing with life of a certain vehement intensity, not only in the emotions of it, but in the outward manner: his soldiers, with all their heartiness, or roughness, or swagger, or strength, men "of strange oaths," full of experience, yet children after all in many things; these are admirable. Or his natives of India, whose circumstances, sordid or picturesque, dignified or pathetic, are felt to be impressive; these he can present to us in perfection. But in whatever he handles well, there must be salient points rather than delicate shades. "One crowded hour of glorious life," splendid and intoxicating, he can render into words of marvellous intensity; some scene of touching pitifulness, quite simple and human, he can draw with touches absolutely true and right. He is master of human nature in the rough, in its primitive or unconventional manifestations. His rapid sketches, carefully as they are designed, give an impression rather of an immense capacity of eye than of a fineness of sympathy and understanding. His work of this "coloured and figured" sort is unrivalled, and stands alone; no one has done anything quite like it. But Mr. Kipling is, or seems to be, so fascinated by these lively effects, that he wishes to treat everything in the same way, which is irritating. He appears almost to despise whatever is not vivid and impressive; to look at everything from the standpoint of a man who knows camps and

barracks, wild countries and native quarters. He attempts to play Othello to his ignorant reader's Desdemona, in a manner almost ludicrous. A writer may be intimate with Valparaiso and Zanzibar, without being superior to the reader, who knows only Bloomsbury and Kensington, or Oxford and Manchester. It is impossible to take English life of all kinds by storm, for literary purposes, with the methods applicable to military stations in India. . . . Take away from Mr. Kipling his salient points and lively effects, and then his style becomes merely commonplace. And even in his best passages, the strained expression, the unrelaxed determination to be vigorous, grows wearisome. Contrast with Mr. Kipling the enchanting style of Pierre Loti: that strangely ironical and gentle style, so caressing and unforgettable. For "Les trois Dames de la Kasbah" we would give many a Plain Tale from the Hills. And, ultimately, Mr. Kipling's incessant vigilance, lest he fall into the hackneyed and the tame, produces an effect of brilliant vulgarity: an effect wholly unjust to Mr. Kipling, yet an inevitable result of his method, when carried to excess. Surely, one protests, we do not want special correspondence, even composed with genius.

Apart from this mannerism, Mr. Kipling's work has innumerable good qualities. Restraint, a dislike of the superfluous, how rare is that just now! To take one small instance: Mr. Kipling makes Dick quote Emerson and Marvell, but he does not mention them by name. In actual life, we do not mention the authors of our quotations: we quote what we suppose familiar to our companions. But in books there seems to come upon the writer a desire to exhibit his reading: he mentions Emerson and Marvell. It is an infinitely small matter, but it is precisely characteristic of Mr. Kipling. Directness, also; only Mr. Meredith, Mr. Hardy, and Mr. Stevenson, to name three very varied writers, can so give us the absolutely right and infallible phrase. Mr. Kipling, with "his eye on the object," is astounding; with no accumulation of detail, no tiresome minuteness, he brings before us the very reality of life and of character, so far as character can be shown in sketches of talk and action. For there are these limitations to Mr. Kipling's art; within them I recognise with gratitude and admiration a fine writer. But, outside them, I seem to see, if I may make a vigorous quotation in Mr. Kipling's manner, "another good man gone wrong." Let us hope for the best, and enjoy what is already in so great a measure so excellent.

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